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ABSTRACT

This document examines various nonformal education strategies in the area of literacy instruction for adults. Written by a Peace Corps volunteer who worked in Nepal, the guide is organized in seven chapters. The first chapter defines nonformal education and provides a rationale for it, especially in underdeveloped countries. The second chapter discusses trends in literacy education, and the following chapter discusses the pros and cons of teaching writing to adults. Adult learning is examined in Chapter 4; chapter 5 provides a perspective on the role of the teacher in Peace Corps literacy classes. Chapter 6 offers practical ideas for volunteers planning nonformal education activities for adults. In the final chapter, linguistics and literacy are discussed, and information is provided on the linguistic background of adults. An annotated list of literacy resource organizations is included in this guide. (KC)

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A PEACE CORPS GUIDE TO LITERACY, ADULT LEARNING, AND NONFORMAL EDUCATION

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A Peace Corps Guide To

LITERACY

ADULT LEARNING

and

NONFORMAL EDUCATION

by

DAVID JARMUL

RPCV/NEPAL

September, 1979

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###

CHAPTER ONE

WHY NONFORMAL EDUCATION?

This book started in Nepal, where I helped organize an adult literacy program when I was a Peace Corps Volunteer from 1977-1979. While researching our materials, one week I visited a Swiss-run project in a hill area east of Kathmandu, the capital. We reached the site after a day-long, winding drive on an unfinished road in the Himalayas. Those with me were interested in other things the Swiss were doing--in agriculture, health and energy--but I was keen to observe their literacy efforts.

I didn't realize it at the time, but I first saw those literacy efforts soon thereafter while watching an agriculture extension worker talk to a group of local farmers. The group stood around him in a clearing near one of the project houses. He spoke for awhile about some farming technique, they discussed it, and then they went out to try it in the fields. The interaction and seeming enthusiasm of the group was impressive, but, at the time, it didn't seem to have much to do with literacy. After all, there were no tools, pencils or paper.

That evening, however, as we dined on a Swiss-Nepali meal, I learned differently. There was a curtain behind our table, and we began to hear voices chanting in Nepali. First a few voices, then more. I lifted the curtain to peer into the adjacent room, and saw a moving sight. That adjacent room was already dark, lit with kerosene lamps that were circled

with straw mats. On the mats, crouching their heads to the waxy, yellowish lights, were the same farmers we had seen earlier in the day. They were chanting from readers, pointing at the words with darkened fingers. Their reading was a singsong, and they rocked back and forth. The farmers were also practicing writing. They would pull up their reader next to a cheap notebook and copy out letters or phrases. For the most part, they worked alone, but they seemed to help each other out if one got stuck. I watched all this for awhile, then closed the curtain to continue eating. We lingered at the table, but as we did, the studying continued in the next room. Every now and then, I'd peer inside. Always the same: the crouching farmers casting long shadows in the lamplight, the singsong voices, the awkwardness of the pointing fingers, the obvious determination to learn.

One reason why those farmers were studying so hard was that the Swiss had developed readers tied to the agriculture work. Many of the lessons dealt not with Jack and Jill-type drivel, but with planting potatoes, selling fruit, holding off moneylenders or visiting Kathmandu--the kind of things the farmers had been learning outside. The idea is called "functional literacy," tying reading and writing together with other development objectives.

"You just can't separate reading instruction from everything else," Veronika Eichenberger, nonformal education coordinator for the project, told me later. "There has to be a good reason for adults to come to class."

But for whatever the reason, it was an emotional thing to see. For consider: Nepal has an illiteracy rate of more than 80 percent. Few adults can read, especially outside of the few cities or large bazaars.

Yet here was a room full of the supposedly unteachable people so often bemoaned by development groups such as Peace Corps--unschooled rural adults--and they were working fiercely to learn reading and writing. I was told that this class has been going on for some time; it wasn't just a flash in the pan. So I imagine that, as I now write this months later, many of those men are literate. That's a remarkable achievement, a moving reminder that even the unteachable can sometimes be taught.

The Swiss project is not unique. There are others like it in the developing world. In the next chapter, I'll focus directly on these new approaches to literacy. But it does exemplify an important change in thinking throughout the development community about the role of education, and specifically adult education. It's a change that is now also being pondered by Peace Corps, and it may result in important programming changes in many Peace Corps countries.

That change is a growing emphasis on adult learning and nonformal education for developing countries.[1] It's long overdue. For too long, education in the developing world has been confined to traditional notions of schools, certified teachers and prescribed curricula. Traditional education, of course, has a place in development, and Peace Corps Volunteers working within existing school systems have over the years made many valuable contributions. But in recent years, growing numbers of people are finally facing the fact that focusing solely on schools does little to help those who never attend them. As a UNESCO report concluded in 1972:

> For hundreds of millions of illiterate people in the world, school can no longer be of help. Moreover, in the developing countries nearly half of the children of primary school age today are condemned, no matter what happens, to grow up without ever having attended a class.[2]

The traditional response to low school enrollments in developing countries has been to try to increase the enrollments. But while this is worthwhile, it should be clear that anything approaching universal education just isn't happening in many places. Either the government doesn't try hard enough to enroll the children, people don't trust the schools, the population is too dispersed--for whatever the reason, schools in many developing countries (as well, some argue, as in the United States) leave large groups untouched. And those groups are precisely the kind that concern Peace Corps: the poorest of the poor, people with basic needs.

Nor is the problem merely quantitative. Many schools offer curricula that are irrelevant to the students. In Nepal, they've only recently stopped teaching stories by Walter Scott and William Wordsworth to high school English students who can barely say, "Hello, how are you?" Teaching methods are often demeaning to students, focusing on memorization and strict obedience to faculty members. Teachers may be poorly trained, but many nonetheless strut before lesser members of the community, more concerned with status than meaningful pedagogy. Worse is the power that many schools have been given by their governments, high school and college credentials becoming exclusive tickets to advancement. Those who possess the credentials, no matter how worthless their education, are allowed to move ahead. Others don't. This creates a false sense of superiority in those who succeed and makes dropouts of those who don't. Schools come to certify not only math or history, but, implicitly, a person's worth as a human being. They may also cheapen in a poor person's eyes those things he has learned on his own outside the school walls. The subsequent division between educated and noneducated groups can be as profound as

religion, race or caste. It creates in the losers what Brazilian educator Paulo Friere calls "an oppressed consciousness":

> The oppressed consciousness feels oppressed...but does not know why; it is imprisoned in the 'culture of silence,' the great barrier facing the 'educators' who want to help them advance.
>
> The oppressed consciousness can be characterized by:
>
> --a huge inferiority complex when faced with 'one who knows';
> --a certain debility ('I don't know'), or lack of self-confidence;
> --an over-powering belief in the invulnerability of the strong...culminating in servility (perhaps as an attempt to conciliate them a little).
>
> All this adds up to a total existential insecurity and great emotional instability...[3]

Ivan Illich, an important critic of all this, says that for less developed countries to buy into such an inappropriate system amounts to a "schooling hoax." By imitating the industrial world's system of schools, credentials, experts and specialized education, developing nations invest their future in an expensive rainbow where only the very top ring can ever hope to reach the pot of gold.

> Educators appeal to the gambling instinct of the entire population when they raise money for schools. They advertise the jackpot without mentioning the odds. And those odds are high indeed for someone who is born brown, poor, or in the pampa. In Latin America, no country is prouder of its legally obligatory admission-free school system than Argentina. Yet only one Argentine of five thousand born into the lower half of the population gets as far as the university.
>
> What is only a wheel of fortune for an individual is a spinning wheel of irreversible underdevelopment for a nation. The high cost of schooling turns education into a scarce resource, as poor countries accept that a certain number of years in school makes an educated man. More money gets spent on fewer people. In poor countries, the school pyramid of the rich countries takes on the shape of

> an obelisk, or a rocket. School inevitably gives individuals who attend it and then drop out, as well as those who don't make it at all, a rationale for their own inferiority. But for poor nations, obligatory schooling is a monument to self-inflicted inferiority...To buy the schooling hoax is to purchase a ticket for the back seat in a bus headed nowhere.[4]

Illich is not alone in charging that schools create as many problems as they solve, although his voice is among the eloquent. Not unexpectedly, his philosophy is anathema to many people with a stake in the system, and the call of some of his followers to abandon traditional schools altogether is unlikely to gain many adherents in education ministries. There's too much at stake. And to be fair, there <u>are</u> many worthwhile things schools do when run properly. Still, the failure of the schools to reach many potential students, teach effectively those who do attend, or cut the cost of producing such a comparatively small elite is a concern for increasing numbers of people. If anything, it is this economics of schooling, not the philosophy behind it, that has forced many nations to search for alternatives.

> In a country with little wealth to begin with, the commitment of nearly half of the national budget to an educational system that invests half the educational expenditure on one percent of the schoolage population, as is the case in Bolivia, is of dubious wisdom... [Each] of Bolivia's university students receives 1,000 times the average citizen's share of public expenditures. Yet the competitive educational model that gives rise to this meritocracy justifies (in the minds of the 'failures,' that vast majority of participants in the schooling game, as well as in the minds of the succeeders) the legitimacy of these grotesque inequalities...The losers are the people; especially the children of the lower classes.[5]

So the economics of the situation are against the developing countries copying Western educational hierarchies if they intend to educate their entire populations. Educational technology may offer some relief, but

television sets can be even more expensive than teachers. What is needed, both from a financial and, many would argue, a pedagogic standpoint, are alternatives to the formal schools.

Thus the rise in recent years of nonformal education programs. Peace Corps is not the only development group to start examining more closely the possibility of educating large numbers of poor people outside the formal school structure. U.S. AID, working with World Education, has increased its activity in the area. Michigan State University has developed a nonformal education teaching and resource center that in the space of a few years has become a major focus of activity on the subject. Nonformal education is also a subject of growing academic research at such places as the University of Massachusetts, Hawaii's East-West Center and the International Council for Educational Development. All this is just within the United States. And nonformal education has become increasingly important to the developing countries themselves.

What is nonformal education? That's not as easy a question to answer as it might seem. Formal schools imply a certified teacher teaching a specified sequence of information in a specific place. Nonformal education is sometimes the opposite of those things, but sometimes not. It may include a traditional adult night class, or a certified teacher tutoring out-of-school dropouts or a group of adults banding together to wade through a prescribed chemistry textbook. Academicians have had a hard time defining nonformal education, and it's only partly because the subject is of such relatively new interest to them. The real problem is that, by its nature, nonformal education encompasses a diverse range of activities outside the formal system. Philip Coombs describes it like this:

> Nonformal education refers to all organized systematic educational activities carried on outside the formal education system, designed to serve specific learning needs of particular sub-groups in the population, either as a supplement or follow-up to formal schooling, or in some instances as an alternative or substitute.[6]

So nonformal education is a number of things, many of which aren't particularly new. Village education, where learning is done on a local level without teachers to meet immediate needs, is as old as civilization. Every Peace Corps Volunteer has seen it. Complementary education, the teaching of subjects outside the formal school curriculum, is also well-established: scouting, youth groups, book clubs and the like. Then there's supplementary education, which is things like in-service workshops, apprenticeship programs or night schools for those who've left or been kicked out from the formal school system. The technical names aren't important; the point is that many of these alternatives are well established. Nor should one get fixed into a grandiose ideology of what nonformal education can accomplish. Some come to it from a desire to reform the schools, others because they don't trust the school at all, still others because they simply view most Third World schools as inefficient places for learning. Anyone in Peace Corps--foreigners serving at another's invitation--will do well to approach nonformal education with a healthy regard for the importance and power of the existing educational structure. Schools are and will remain important institutions to Peace Corps host countries. While nonformal education has in places such as China and Tanzania operated on a scale almost as massive as the schools themselves, in most countries it is now only filling in the fringes. And that's likely to remain the case for many years.

But thinking about nonformal education at least leads one out of the box of seeing schools as the only way to teach people. Peace Corps Volunteers or anyone else confronted with a situation that calls for a nonformal strategy ought to at least recognize that such an option is there. Planners should realize that their range of alternatives is much wider than the confines of a classroom. This is true for almost any conceivable area: goals and objectives, learning methodologies, staffing, pupil selection, facilities, association with other groups, governance, financing or rewards.[7]

That's what this book sets out to do. In the pages ahead, it will examine various nonformal education strategies, particularly for adults and in the area of literacy instruction. It is not intended as a panacea or replacement for schools, but, we hope, it will offer some workable ideas.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERACY EDUCATION: OFF CENTER STAGE

This new emphasis on nonformal and nontraditional education has brought major changes to literacy instruction, long a top concern of developing countries. Two trends in recent years are particularly important. First, many educators are saying increasingly that reading doesn't require six or eight years of sequential instruction, that it can be taught through other methods in a much shorter time. Second, literacy is being portrayed less and less as an end unto itself. Planners increasingly see it as simply a skill necessary for related means to economic development. In this sense, literacy education in the developing world is like a child screen phenomenon that's kicked off center stage on reaching middle age. The star performer of development programs increasingly plays a supporting role to other payers: health, agriculture, energy. But even this recasting is not enough for some planners and theorists who are now calling for programs that will provide literacy instruction only when potential students ask for it explicitly.

Both trends are important. While we will in the next chapter look at various literacy methods in detail, the thread tying many of them together is that the instruction of reading and writing is not as hard as a lot of school people crack it up to be. Herbert Kohl, writing about illiteracy

in America, might as well have been discussing developing countries when he wrote:

> There is no reading problem. There are problem teachers and problem schools. Most people who fail to learn how to read in our society are victims of a fiercely competitive system of training that requires failure. If talking and walking were taught in most schools we might end up with as many mutes and cripples as we now have non-readers...Reduced to basics the following are sufficient to enable people to acquire the skill of reading as well as develop the ability to perfect that skill:
>
> 1. a person who knows how to read and is interested in sharing that skill, and who has
>
> 2. a nonelitist, noncompetitive attitude toward sharing knowledge and information as well as
>
> 3. some understanding of the process of learning to read and
>
> 4. a belief that reading is an important human activity that the young should master;
>
> 5. pencils or pens, writing surfaces and printed material, if possible;
>
> 6. a context for learning in which learners feel secure enough to make mistakes and ask questions;
>
> 7. respect for the culture and mind of the learner and therefore an ability to understand and use what the student brings to the situation; and finally
>
> 8. patience, a sense that there is time to learn.
>
> 9. the learner should have the ability to use some language as well as reasonably intact senses and
>
> 10. the learner has a desire to read or at least curiosity about reading[1]

Kohl's remark that "there is no reading problem" can be misconstrued easily. After all, UNESCO estimated in 1975 that about 34 percent of the world's population was illiterate. UNESCO also concluded that:

> Illiteracy has a close correlation with poverty. In the 25 least developed countries, where the per capita income is less than $100 per year, illiteracy rates are over 80 percent.
>
> It should also be said that countries with the highest illiteracy rates tend also to have higher population growth rates...
>
> But the problem has still greater dimensions: illiteracy is caught in a vicious circle, not only is it a source of inequalities but it is simultaneously the product of other inequalities in a society (e.g., political, social and economic)...Existing social structures in some countries do not favor equality of opportunity: education has often been misdirected, with undue emphasis on the training of elites and the adoption of standards inappropriate for the participation of the general population, and even reforms have led to new structures thus favoring elites. Social/economic situations still exist in which literacy is not required (subsistence farming, barter trading systems, etc.)...[2]

Nor is illiteracy a problem limited to the developing world. A 1979 report written by World Education for the Ford Foundation estimates that 57 million Americans are functionally illiterate, unable to read or write well enough to operate productively in modern society.

Still, Kohl's focus on the need for a compatible teacher and, more important, on motivation from the learner have much in common with an increasing tendency among development planners to tie literacy with larger goals. The Nepal project cited in the previous chapter, for example, links literacy to instruction in agriculture. This notion of functional literacy has been pushed especially by UNESCO, which sponsored a controversial $32 million international functional literacy program. Literacy experts initiated this hookup with other development projects in part

because they were having trouble getting students into the classroom without such a lure. Not surprisingly, many of those students lured into such classrooms then ignored the literacy component of their courses and focused on what they really wanted in the first place. This continued coolness to literacy was disturbing to the international literacy establishment, which is a force to be dealt with. But for other planners, the continued failure of literacy-oriented programs throughout the world was a signal to stop trying to force something on poor people that they weren't motivated to do in the first place. In many nonliterate societies, reading and writing are simply less important than fresh water, healthier livestock or increased food production.

"Health, nutrition, attaining income--these are all development problems," says Catherine Crone, director of the technical services unit for World Education, the private organization that promotes functional education in the United States and developing countries. "It's colonialistic for somebody to come into some country and say 'you all really ought to be learning how to read.' The people in the villages may consider something else more important."

What has happened recently then is that some planners are, in effect, willing to put literacy on development's back burner until potential students ask to learn it. They point to countries with innovative and successful literacy programs--Cuba, China, Brazil and Tanzania--and note that the instruction there has always been linked with or subordinated to something else of importance, be it agriculture techniques, revolutionary ideology or political discussion. Literacy is not the goal by itself, but an important component of the larger goal of economic progress or social

justice. It must be considered in that larger context, and it must never be pressed upon people.

This rethinking of literacy, of course, predominates in some quarters more than in others. While the total number of adult illiterates is rising--UNESCO puts it about 810 million--the problem varies dramatically from country to country, and within countries themselves. Literacy is more common in urban areas and among men. But many government statistics are suspect, and different survey methods or definitions of literacy make comparisons difficult. In one country, literacy may mean little more than signing one's name, while in another it means mastery of various tasks.[3]

Still, most nations agree that illiteracy is a major obstacle to economic development, and they have over the years sponsored numerous campaigns to combat it. Many have failed. The feeling today among many observers is that these failures were due to an unwillingness to face political questions, a narrow focus on education or hesitancy in asking poor adults directly about their other problems.

Jonathan Kozol, the noted education critic, attributes the failures to a lack of political fortitude and an unwillingness among the planners to identify emotionally with the real needs of the oppressed:

> The real problem is the old familiar syndrome of the type of project that UNESCO chose to undertake in the beginning: the same kind of project that is carried out so frequently both in the U.S. and in Europe, not to "win a battle" but to "test out an idea." (So long as we can designate our project an "experiment," then clearly there can be no charges of failure.) All of this would be quite fine, of course--and harmless, too--if millions of people did not starve and live in ignorance as a direct result.[4]

"Some of those programs just flopped," agreed Bernard Wilder, Chief of the Human Resources, Science and Technology Division of U.S. AID, who is

less political in his analysis. "There have been changes in what people feel is the purpose of literacy. The focus now has shifted from methods to motivation."

We learned that to just go out with a bunch of books was not the best thing," says Lyra Srinivasan, an Indian scholar with wide experience in adult education. "It only works when you combine it with something else important to your student's life."

So the focus now is increasingly on what people themselves want to learn, even if it isn't literacy. Economic development is considered the catalyst for education, not the reverse. Mary Brunet makes this point:

> If a farmer reads in his literacy course about how to use fertilizers, there must be fertilizers available at a price he can afford. If unskilled factory workers are taught to read printed instructions, it is easier to train them for skilled jobs. But somebody has to provide the training and some factory has to be able to give them jobs. Otherwise they feel like the man on the road--that they've wasted their time getting nowhere.[5]

This new focus is being tried out in a number of projects throughout the developing world. In the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement, an experimental project linked to a similar effort in Kenya, rural women meet to discuss local problems. They assess their own community needs and decide what they ought to learn. Only if they ask for literacy is it provided. Early results from the project show that literacy is sometimes a low priority. This doesn't bother the program coordinators.

"We've discovered that there are only a few people who have a burning desire to read and write," says Noreen Clark, one adviser to the project. "It's the people from the outside who have the preoccupation with literacy. We're not worried if these women don't choose immediately to read. When they think it's important, they'll say so."

Other projects have also been experimenting with this integrated approach to adult education. They include the Functional Literacy and Family Life Planning Program in Thailand, the Nonformal Education for Rural Women project in Andhra Pradesh, India, and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee. A similar emphasis on learner motivation can also be found in the 1979 Ford Foundation report on illiteracy within the United States.

"We've learned that you can teach someone a whole hell of a lot without literacy," says Dr. Wilder. "To learn about fertilizers, it isn't necessary for a farmer to know how to read. I'm not saying you shouldn't make literacy classes available. You should--always. But you have to concentrate on people's motivations."

Adults pursue literacy for a variety of reasons, experts say. It can increase income. Reading may be tied to social reforms, as in China. A 1970 study in Laos concluded that many men came to class to learn to write love letters. Understanding such motivations, they say, is the key to successful adult education. Literacy is never to be denied anyone, but it should be viewed within the broader context of development and learner needs.

Still, even as these and other theorists sound their call for an ever greater emphasis on learner motivation, several factors suggest that a general move away from traditional education is unlikely in the future.

Perhaps the most important hurdle to newer, nontraditional approaches to adult education is the status attached to formal school credentials.

"The certificate, the piece of paper, is still very important," says John Sommer, who headed an education review team for Peace Corps. "An education minister may argue for nonformal education and new approaches to

literacy, but you can be sure his own kids are going to get their diplomas." Host country officials may also be suspicious why someone in Peace Corps is trying to promote alternatives to a formal school structure so strong within the United States. Are we keeping the tried-and-true techniques for ourselves, fobbing off the shoddy nonformal goods in an effort to maintain our national power and wealth? And then there's the preoccupation with literacy statistics, which is hard to break despite its uncertain measuring of real development.

"It's very hard to convince governments or agencies that concentrating on other things will eventually lead to literacy," says Dr. Srinivasan. She and others cite problems in obtaining funds for projects such as the one in the Philippines.

"There is a huge literacy establishment," observes Dr. Clark. "This isn't to say that they aren't doing good work. Many of them are. But there is a vested interest in existing literacy programs."

And there is a final question that faces any educator, especially an American serving to help poor people in a foreign country: don't we always have an obligation to promote literacy where we can?

"This is exceedingly interesting in its political implications," says Dr. Clark. "It's all well and good for us who can read and write to say that literacy may not be the greatest need for other people. One has to remember that not being able to read can be a very disempowering thing. What we have to do is increase people's motivation to take advantage of literacy programs already there."

CHAPTER THREE

TEACHING WRITING

There is an obvious connection between the teaching of reading and writing, but experts disagree as to just how close it is. Some say that teaching the two together reinforces complementary skills, the act of writing a word impressing it upon the memory. Others say that writing can distract a student from reading. As with reading, writing requires an assortment of physical and cognitive skills, in this case eye-to-hand coordination, decent eyesight, trained hand muscles and the like. Educators also disagree here as to who has the advantage in learning to write: an adult or a child. Adults bring a greater maturity and command of the oral language, but children are faster to learn new motor skills and less likely to suffer perceptual or muscular problems. These differences between adult and child learners are discussed in the following chapter.

But what about the basic question, the matter of whether writing ought to be incorporated from the start with reading instruction? Sarah Gudschinsky lists in "The Teaching of Writing" the advantages and disadvantages of simultaneous instruction:[1]

Advantages of Teaching Writing

1. Writing provides an excellent review exercise for the reading lessons. This may be especially advantageous for the slow pupil.
2. Beginning pupils, either adults or children, are unable at first to concentrate on reading for a long period of time. A short

lesson in writing after each half hour or so will rest the pupils and help them return to their reading activities with renewed interest and vigour.

3. Pupils who finish their reading lessons faster than the rest of the class will be less likely to present a disciplinary problem if they are occupied with writing than with trying to amuse themselves while waiting for further instruction.

4. Workers who have encouraged their pupils to try letter writing have found that it stimulated the desire to both read and write. Naturally, the first messages contained only a few words, perhaps only those in the reading lessons. The teacher's reply, using different words based on the reading lessons, was an incentive to work harder on reading and writing. In a number of actual cases, within a comparatively few months these notes became intelligent, original and informative. When the teacher had to leave the area, letters were exchanged by mail. In this way, the enthusiasm for reading continued even after the pupils were left without a teacher.

Disadvantages of Teaching Writing

1. If writing becomes an exercise in mechanically copying letters with no attention paid to reading what is written, little if any value will result from the effort.

2. If the classes are large, extra reading drills may be more helpful for the progress of the group as a whole than individual help in writing.

3. Writing may bring a demand to be taught to alphabet before it is logical in the reading programme, and reading progress may be hindered.

4. If very many pupils become interested in writing letters to the teacher, answering them may become a serious drain on the teacher's time, and many hinder his accomplishing anything else outside of class.

One should also consider the emotional value given writing by Freire and others. Even those advocating less political pedagogies often recommend teaching students to write words before letters. The letters will follow, they say, and it is critical to make clear to the student at the very outset that writing is a process of communication. "It is difficult

to defend a method of teaching adults to write which concentrates attention at the beginning on the elements of letters," writes William Gray, one literacy expert. Gray says it is better to concentrate "attention from the beginning on the writing of whole words, coupled with sufficient practice on specific parts of words that cause difficulty to ensure clear, legible writing." Gudschinsky makes a related point in arguing that dictation should begin from the first day that pupils know two letters that form a syllable. She, too, is concerned with fluency in writing, on not breaking a sentence or word into smaller parts unless a student is having great difficulty. Pupils should avoid writing syllable by syllable. This may seem impractical--"how can they write a whole sentence if they don't even know the letters?"--but it is important to teach writing as content, not as rote copying.

Still, as with any art, content cannot be separated completely from form. The shape of letters must be explained. And there are real problems with this concept of teaching writing as meaning. Too little attention may be given to the correct formation of letters, and untrained teachers may have trouble guiding students. Indeed, there are two other general approaches quite different from this whole word method. One is teaching the basic strokes involved in forming the letters. The other is starting out with the letters themselves, introduced either in alphabetical order or in groups that are similar in form. Advocates of this second plan claim that adults are aided greatly in learning to write by comparing letters that differ only slightly. As soon as possible, these letters are grouped into syllables and words. Critics of this approach say it is too boring.

But as with reading, choosing a writing method is rarely all one thing or the other. Teaching the shape and meaning of a word can be incorporated. A teacher can teach the whole word method while still focusing attention on specific letters or word parts that give students trouble. The teaching approach also depends greatly on the nature of the language, available materials, the amount of teacher training and the extent to which volunteers are expected to follow a prescribed curriculum.

Writing instruction will vary considerably from country to country, and from language to language. In some cases, printed or block printing will be easier to teach than cursive, in other situations not.[2] Other languages may only have a single writing style. Some volunteers may teach in a well-equipped classroom, others with sticks on the dirt. Those planning a formal writing program should consult the handwriting section in the bibliography. But in any case, stay flexible, match writing with reading where it seems appropriate and make the best use of what there is available.[3]

CHAPTER FOUR

ADULT LEARNING

There's more that makes a class of adults distinctive than just the age of its students. Adult learning is different physically, cognitively and socially from the learning of a child. In this chapter we will examine those differences and suggest ways to approach an adult classroom.

The most obvious fact about adult students is that often they are not in the best of shape physically. Few Peace Corps Volunteers need to be reminded of the many diseases suffered by those in the developing world. Such delights as yaws, bilharziasis, malaria, amoebic dysentery, typhoid fever, hookworm, trachoma, sleeping sickness and the like can sap a student's strength and will to work. Many times people suffer from several diseases simultaneously. When one adds malnutrition, economic exploitation, isolation and illiteracy, the student's got real problems. Furthermore, adult classes are often held in the evening, after a hard day's work. The exhausted student may have trouble sitting still in a chair, although there's no rule saying a class must be held sitting down. What's more, adults have well-established habits, many of them unnoticeable, but some of which must nonetheless be modified during learning. For example, we take it for granted that a person's eye can move easily from left to right across parallel lines of type. But for an adult student,

this may be frightening. In short, anyone teaching a class of adults must watch for a host of troubles that interfere with learning.

The predictable problems with adults concern vision, hearing, reaction speed and handwriting. Checking everyone's vision at the beginning of a course may be difficult with illiterate adults unable to read an eye chart, but the teacher should try anyway. Many adults do not see as well as they did when younger. Common signs of vision trouble include squinting, leaning forward to see better or strange positioning of the head. The teacher should make all visual aids large enough to be seen from far away, keep both his or her own face and the blackboard in the light, avoid shadows and keep the blackboard clean and easy to read.

Signs of hearing difficulty include a lack of attention, straining forward to hear, or the classic putting of the hand behind the ear. To help here, the teacher must speak clearly and slowly, repeat or write down difficult words, not cover his mouth with his hands, keep his mouth in the light and make it easy for those with hearing problems to sit in the front.

As for reaction time, some adults experience a loss of speed as the years pass and thus ask more questions and required more learning cues. This is not a matter of smartness versus stupidity so much as a simple matter of pacing. If people are older and slower, the teacher must simply make his class more relaxed and give students the time needed to finish their work.

The obvious problems with handwriting is that it requires the delicate use of muscles that have long been unused.[1] A farmer trying to write his name with gnarled fingers has as much trouble as a city-raised American working a plow for the first time.

These problems are physical and can often be remedied with straightforward solutions. More difficult is the matter of cognitive performance, or how well adults actually think and learn. Some students may seem on the brink of senility, unable to grasp difficult new concepts or learn new techniques, but actually the situation is more encouraging than that. Adults are simply better than children at some things and worse at others. They often emphasize caution and accuracy instead of speed and need more redundant cueing. Adults are less likely to parrot, more likely to analyze and tend to be good at fast memorization. There are wide differences from adult to adult, and their learning is made more complex by the many psychological and social factors affecting them. What is important is to avoid a direct, better-or-worse comparison between children and adults. As psychologist Jean Piaget and others have discovered, people of different ages learn things in fundamentally different ways. It's not a matter of quantity, but basic differences in perception and learning. One reality is no better or worse than the other, but each does have to be treated on its own terms. A child cannot be taught about death in the same tones in which one teaches an adult, and the same holds true for teaching reading, health, business management or whatever.

Launching into a discussion of general learning theory is beyond the realm of this chapter. It is a vast field, encompassing writers as diverse as B.F. Skinner, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Jerome Bruner and numerous others, each worthy of extensive study. The important point to remember from a practical perspective is that age in itself is relatively unimportant as a barrier to learning. What is much more important is whether the adult is healthy, motivated and properly guided.

> In general, nobody under 35 years of age should ever restrain himself from trying to learn anything because of fear that he is too old to learn; nor should he use that fear as an excuse for not learning anything he ought to learn. If he fails in learning, inability due to age will very rarely, if ever, be the reason.[2]

Adults learn most effectively within the framework of clearly defined systems, where the content has been divided logically into small work units with a uniform sequence. There must be a clear, evenly paced progression from the known to the unknown, with frequent review along the way. Many adult students in developing countries have little experience with systematic, sustained education. They have not learned to attend to a classroom stimulus, nor how to identify the parts of that stimulus important to learning. For many adults, this means learning to abstract, grasping that a set of shapes can represent letters that spell out objects from real life, understanding that a picture in a nutrition pamphlet represents a disease-bearing insect. We, as readers, can forget easily the complexity of this process. It is often something much easier to grasp during childhood than when adult habits have been established. For an adult student, understanding this process of abstraction can be as difficult as the content of the lesson. But if this greater adult experience and stronger habit pattern impedes certain kinds of conceptualization, it does help elsewhere. For one thing, the adult approaches the situation with considerably more ability to analyze problems about real life. He can generally handle higher levels of cognitive difficulty--synthesis, analysis and evaluation. This also means he or she is likely to become frustrated with a heavy emphasis on mechanical learning. So there must be a good balance between ideas and mechanics, especially in a literacy classroom.

Dealing specifically with reading, teachers can anticipate two problems with adult learners. One is frequent regressions when reading, i.e., the reader returning often to words, lines and paragraphs he has already read. In part this is due to the student not grasping the symbolic idea behind reading, that the letters and words represent reality. The problem is also due frequently to inappropriate vocabulary within the passages themselves. This can be avoided by using better passages or, if possible, student-generated stories such as those discussed in the previous chapter. A second adult reading problem is word-by-word reading, often accompanied by lip movements and an exaggerated pointing at every word to be read. This may be the accepted way to read within the local culture--university students in some societies singsong trigonometry lessons--but it can also be due to eye problems. Be alert to this.

What are some of the other differences between teaching adults and teaching children? The heterogeneous character of adult classes contrasts sharply with those of children. Youngsters may have different abilities, but they tend to be the same age and from similar backgrounds. Not so for adults. This makes planning and teaching more difficult. Some adult students lack the discipline of study, others may still suffer from a bad memory of their childhood school experience. Attendance is often irregular. Since adult education is usually voluntary, curriculum planning is more flexible and there is greater immediacy about what takes place. Adults want to use quickly what they learn, while children expect to apply their education later in life.

Dr. Karel Neijs lists these seven differences between adult and child learning:

1. Adults possess maturity in life experience, will power, perseverance, reasoning and practical judgment and language habits.

2. Adults know, or think they know, their own little world. There is a certain rigidity of thoughts and habits and a concept of the learning process as such, although on the other hand, uneducated adults may fail to assess their learning powers correctly--either under-estimating or over-estimating them wildly.

3. A child has some definite learning advantages; as regards foreign-language learning they were assessed to consist in: greater flexibility of his vocal organs, spontaneous oral imitation, sensitivity to the forms of speech heard and natural love of repetition. In the adolescent and the adult some of these would be weaker, but organized memorizing and greater capacity for effort would supplement them.

4. Adults know what they want, and are, therefore, critical of their instructional materials, while children display a more spontaneous and greater curiosity towards teaching aids.

5. Adults have a relative command of language. Literacy teaching in their mother tongue, therefore, means firstly correct symbol recognition and only secondly growth in language habits.

6. Adults possess the faculties of logic and reasoning to a greater degree than children. They dislike a large amount of repetition, their memory can be helped by devices of seeing similarities, but their reasoning demands quick progress in the first place.

7. Failure has usually more immediate consequences with an adult than with children, and there are many hampering psychological factors which could promote failure.[3]

Many adults whom Peace Corps Volunteers might teach have had bad school experiences, or no schooling at all. It takes a lot of courage from them to acknowledge their need of instruction or to attend a public class. Dealing with an American doesn't necessarily make it easier. What does this volunteer really want anyway? Is this going to be another put-down? Some students may get an attack of nerves at the last moment and skip class. The Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) handbook describes the sensation well:

> It may be that the student just could not bring himself to get there when the hour arrived. He was plain scared. It takes a great deal of courage to admit your inadequacy and ask for assistance. As a teacher you have been trained for this teaching, you have been told about your student, and yet you are going to the first teaching session with butterflies in your stomach. Think how much more frightened your student is. He is not sure what kind of a person will be meeting him. Will he be ridiculed again? Having gotten this far without learning, he is not sure he can ever learn anyway...
>
> He has doubts and questions, hoping against hope for one last chance. How you relate to your students as a person is more important as you teach him to read.
>
> Your student may be wondering what <u>you</u> are getting out of this. When he finds you are a volunteer--that you are teaching him because you sincerely care and want to help him--a new understanding on his part often results.[4]

So consider that if an adult does bother to attend a class, it's probably for what he or she considers a very good reason. The student may want to qualify for a promotion, make more money, grow better crops, have a healthier family, meet new friends, pass an examination, learn to read and write or simply increase his knowledge.[5]

What can you do to lessen student anxiety? One adult education expert says this about it:

> Most adults experience some anxiety in the classroom situation. This anxiety is often expressed through hostility, refusal to interact, or conversely a demand for attention by excessive interaction. To alleviate anxiety, the instructor should place the group at ease at the beginning of the program...
>
> a. Training should begin with a "Getting to Know You" interchange...teacher and students telling something about themselves, their backgrounds, qualifications (students want a qualified teacher), etc. Encourage quieter students to speak.
>
> b. Respond favorably to any student question and encourage participation throughout the course. Never ignore a comment or

question, no matter how trite or negative it may be.

c. Put yourself in the place of the students. Understand that they come from different backgrounds and have diverse abilities. Some may misunderstand directions and be ill at ease, while others may know more than the teacher.

d. Try not to lecture, but rather to talk more informally.

The same writer makes these recommendations for adult students who have memory problems or trouble grasping concepts:

a. Cue redundantly when giving definitions or directions or when illustrating an important point. Make use of oral and written presentations. Write the difficult word or concept on the chalk board.

b. Request definitions from the group and avoid jargon.

c. Do not do all the talking.

d. Foster self-discovery. Rather than doing their thinking, encourage student participation in the learning situation.

e. Illustrate concepts by sharing personal experiences.

f. Encourage students to share their own experiences. The opportunity to apply past experience is a major consideration in successful adult learning.[6]

And while we are printing other people's lists, one of the best is from the adult education department in Tanzania, which offers these conditions under which adults learn best:

1. Adults learn best when they want to learn, when they are interested, when they are motivated.

2. When they are treated like adults.

3. When they do something.

4. When they get some opportunity to practice or try out what they are doing.

5. When they know how well they are doing and when they get some feeling of success.

6. When the teaching and subject matter are of real use in their daily lives.

7. When there is repetition and revision.

8. When the teacher recognizes that they have experience and makes use of this experience in teaching.

9. When the new learning is related to something they already know.

10. When they feel free to ask questions and there is some discussion between students and teacher.[7]

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TEACHER

The role of a Peace Corps Volunteer teaching adults is in some ways just the sum of its parts. All of those Peace Corps qualities taught during training--compassion, cultural empathy and the like--must be put to use. And traditional teaching principles such as careful lesson planning and instruction also must be followed. But teaching adults in a developing country involves much more than simply adapting traditional classroom techniques, or of leading students through a government textbook. It is also about student dignity and self-confidence. Accumulating information or learning a few marketable skills is of little long-term value if a person remains dependent economically and psychologically.

Many writers and development experts have commented on this special role of the adult teacher in developing societies, recognizing that the development projects that have had the greatest success are those that have just this focus on learner integrity and motivation. Their arguments differ, but they agree that teachers must break away from forcing instruction on people and instead teach what those people want themselves. Villagers worried about the health of their livestock will never do well in a business management class until the livestock problem is remedied. This rethinking explains the decline in traditional literacy instruction, described in Chapter 2.

By making the student the dominant member of the learner equation, the dynamics of the process are changed completely. The teacher is no longer a wizard there to fill up the empty human vessels with prescribed knowledge. Such a conception of the teacher as disburser for an information bank, bestowing knowledge on the ignorant, puts students in a completely passive role, often alienating them from the reality they know. The teacher's purpose now is something different, not lecturing or handing out information, but facilitating student growth. The real goal is liberation, enabling students to grasp their power as learners and human beings. Subject content is indeed important, but no more so than students leaving the class with integrity and confidence. The point is this: Just what is the real objective? Just why does a Peace Corps Volunteer bother teaching adults in the first place? Is it simply to teach reading, a recipe or new construction idea? What happens after the two years and the volunteer goes home? Those new skills may improve people's lives, of course, and that is not to be disparaged. But the larger question, whether the students learn only to please this novel American instructor or instead respect themselves and continue the process thereafter, cannot be ignored.

These issues are hardly new, of course; they are familiar to any Peace Corps Volunteer who has been through training. But one must recognize in adult education that there is always this purpose larger than the lessons at hand. This is doubly true when the teacher is a foreigner.

> Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of men in their relations with the world. "Problem-posing" education, responding to the essence of consciousness--<u>intentionality</u>--rejects communiques and embodies communication.[1]

Nonformal and adult education planners have tried in different ways to give life to such principles. Leaders of a project in Ecuador, for example, laid down three guiding principles for their teachers (or "facilitators," as they were called). First was "complete and unconditional respect for the community's social and cultural mores, their values and their ways of life. Second was an acceptance of both teachers and students as part of a dynamic and historical process. And third was a constant consideration of whether the political and social situation itself needed changing.[2] Designers of the highly successful Cuban literacy campaign took special measures to promote direct identification between students and teachers.[3] Some adult education guidebooks in Africa insist that teachers address their students with proper titles: Mr., Mrs., (Ms.?) or whatever.[4] In all, the principle is the same. The teacher must get off his pulpit, realize that he or she can learn as much as the student, and embrace the mutuality of real education.

These principles are important. At the same time, it is easy to get caught up in the rhetoric of it all, forgetting some of the other guidelines of teaching. Identifying with adult students certainly doesn't mean abandoning established principles of instruction. While a comprehensive guide to teaching is beyond the scope of this work, certain general points are obvious. For example, classroom objectives must be well defined and understood by both students and teachers. There must be clear standards of acceptable performance. Students should be tested at the beginning and end of any class, and during instruction as well. Lessons should always teach set objectives, and exams check whether the objectives have been met. Teachers ought to have well-prepared lessons, assign and grade homework where needed and try to individualize instruction.

Adults learn best when they are treated as adults. The Tanzania adult education handbook makes these suggestions for teachers:

1. Give each student a friendly greeting as he arrives.
2. Make the seating arrangement informal.
3. Make each student feel that he has something to contribute to the class.
4. Do not insist that each student stand up to recite; promote a feeling of discussion among equals.
5. Be tactful in correcting mistakes. Although a student should not be given the wrong impression, correction should be done in such a way that the student still feels that he can learn.
6. Don't make adults feel hurried or that they are being pushed beyond what they can achieve.[5]

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) promotes these teacher qualities:

Patience: Teachers must have many virtues, but perhaps the greatest of these is patience. Sometimes learning seems very slow...The teacher must show how, not show off.

Understanding: When nonreaders come for help, they are usually burdened with social problems. Because of their lack of education, many of them have lived their lives in frustration, economic insecurity, and feelings of inferiority...You cannot solve all their problems, but you can try to understand and perhaps direct them to agencies that can help solve some of their problems.

There will be times, however, when your student may have a sick child, may have just lost his job, may have been evicted from his home, or may have a teacher at school who is impatient or unsympathetic. No one can concentrate on reading with problems like that. You will have to judge when he needs a listening friend.

Concentration: Your main job is to teach. Your session with your student must be just that--a teaching session.

Kindness: For many years, some students have bluffed their way along, using their wits to cover their inadequacies, not daring to admit the minimal skills they have in reading. Be gentle with these feelings. It is very hard for an adult or teenager to admit he cannot accomplish what is expected of a six-year old.

Enthusiasm: Keep you enthusiasm high...But do not pretend success when both you and your student know it is not deserved...An occasional

mistake that you make can help make more legitimate the mistakes your student makes. It is not so bad to be wrong if even teachers are wrong sometimes.

Awareness of special problems: There are special problems that cause some people to move more slowly than others. Some learn slowly because they need many repetitious in order to build associations in their minds. Intellectual capacity varies from one person to another, and many poor reading students may have an IQ score that suggests below average functioning.

Dedication: You must realize that you will not always achieve big successes with your student, even though this is your hope. Small successes and short-term goals may be your rewards. But you will never know how far the ripples go from the pebble you drop in the sea. You may never know how much influence you may have by teaching your student.

Commitment: A volunteer teacher must make a real commitment to the job. He or she is working with people and will probably greatly influence at least one person's life.

Other qualities: Adaptability, sense of humor, encouragement and creativity.

LVA also suggests solutions for some common problems faced by teachers of adults:

1. Student does not show up for first meeting.

   You should persist. Contact him again, for he is probably frightened. Be sure he has the right time and place. Describe or identify yourself in case the person does not know you well.

2. Student does not show up regularly.

   Be patient up to a point. Realize that many adult nonreaders have not been accustomed to schedules. This may be a new and difficult experience. After four or five absences without calls, a teacher should check with his or her leader, asking for advice and help.

3. Student's progress is slower than anticipated.

   Do not get easily discouraged. You must not measure a student's progress by your own standards. Patience and praise for small successes do much to encourage a slow student to plug harder.

   If after a reasonable length of time, you feel no progress or minimal progress is being made, consult your leader for advice, possibly even terminating the teacher-student relationship. There may be problems beyond your abilities and training.

4. Student lacks motivation.

   Realize that adults who have gone this far and are still non-readers are often geared to failure. It takes a long time to undo attitudes of defeat. Setting short-term realistic goals shows both the student and you that progress is being made. Small successes and real progress, even though limited, do much to motivate a student.

5. Student brings all his home problems to the lesson, leaving little time for study.

   Listen as a friend for a few minutes, but direct the student's attention to the real reason for the meeting--to study together. Volunteer tutors are not trained in counseling. They can best help their students with serious problems by directing them to specialists that can provide professional help.[6]

The above suggestions were written for teachers of American students, but they can be applied readily by Peace Corps Volunteers. Some volunteers in Bolivia had the following to say about teaching adults:

> The students may keep coming to class out of respect for the teacher, because the teacher takes personal interest in them as individuals, because their work is praised by the teacher, because the lessons themselves are interesting (humorous, varied, including audio-visual devices), or because the enthusiasm of the teacher and his news and stories are catching. It all depends on the teacher.[7]

One of the wisest recommendations comes from Herbert Kohl, writing here particularly about teachers of reading:

> It also helps to have a sense of humor about learning. After all, the seriousness with which some people approach the process of reading is laughable. What should be easy and natural, a source of pleasure and power, can be turned into a grim and tedious chore that makes no sense to the learner and therefore destroys motivation. The situation reminds me of a singing class I observed recently. The students were seated in front of a grim-faced teacher who was repeating in a sing-song voice the words of some choral piece composed for school children. Most of the kids were obeying the teacher's commands and singing when she said sing, repeating the words when she said repeat, keeping quiet when she said silence. The singing was

> awful--off-key, expressionless, unmusical in every way. Yet I know most of the kids--they sing well and joyously at home and on the streets, their voices are true and full of expression. There is no need to motivate them to sing, yet if school was the only experience they had with music there surely would be a problem of motivation. In the same way reading is a problem for young people only if we--the adults who already read--make it a problem.[8]

A brief word about teacher training. While compassion and openness may be the most important qualities for successful teaching in developing countries, they are also hard things to train people to use. Especially in many Peace Corps countries, teachers are often conditioned to treating uneducated adults as inferiors. This habit is not easy to break, but it is possible to do so. Anyone involved in training others to teach adults will do well to check the bibliography for the section on teacher training. It may be easier to explain certain principles and techniques to fellow volunteers than to host country teachers with different backgrounds.

CHAPTER SIX

PRACTICAL PLANNING IDEAS

This chapter offers a baker's dozen of practical suggestions for volunteers planning nonformal education activities for adults. It's an eclectic assortment of lists, pointers and excerpts compiled from various sources. Anyone using the material ought to recall the main points from the previous chapters: the need to integrate literacy and nonformal education projects with larger goals, the importance of learner motivation, the differences between adult and school-age students and the special role of a Peace Corps teacher. Readers are also urged to consult the annotated bibliography.

These topics follow:

1. Administrative planning for adult education.
2. Practical suggestions for teachers of illiterate adults.
3. Adult learning activities.
4. Making learning an active process.
5. Organizing classes.
6. Audio-visual aids.
7. Encouraging your student.
8. Supporting services for literacy.
9. Recruiting.
10. Visual literacy.

11. Reading materials.

12. Techniques for remembering words.

13. Literacy games.

1. Administrative planning for adult education

The following list from an adult education handbook in Tanzania identifies steps that should be considered by anyone planning for an adult education class:

1. Collect facts.
2. Identify needs.
3. Set objectives and define priorities.
4. Decide on the subjects which will meet the needs.
5. Choose the best form for the programme.
6. Make a budget.
7. Choose meeting places.
8. Decide on the timetable.
9. Recruit teachers or group leaders.
10. Recruit students.
11. Inform or train teachers or group leaders.
12. Find suitable methods and materials.

2. Practical suggestions for teachers of illiterate adults

The following list from a teacher training guidebook gives seven practical suggestions for those teaching illiterate adults:

1. "Create a friendly and cheerful atmosphere in your class." Where convenient, arrange the seats in a circular manner and seat yourself as one of the students.
2. "Help your students to stay interested." Expect less submissiveness from your students, some of whom might be as old as

you--or even older. Any suggestions of superiority on your part will be hateful to the student. Try to know your students and their temperaments.

3. "Be careful how you correct your students" if they make mistakes. Remember that you are not to ridicule nor be sarcastic nor scolding. You should always avoid making your students lose face. If you have to make a correction it is a wise step to emphasize the positive or encourage the student to imitate you. Praise good performance without seeming to be too lavish in your praise. You don't have to correct every mistake the moment it is made unless it is a serious one.

4. "Mind your manners." The mere pointing at an adult may be considered very offensive. If you persist in this, the student may sever connection and even discourage others from attending your class.

5. "Avoid repetition and drill" which may be resentful to the adult illiterate.

6. "Let students learn at their own pace." Some adults want short, intensive instruction, while others slug on and consume a good deal of time in digesting the instruction given them. This means that your role as a teacher should be to guide the learning activity by arranging the situation so that the adult learner will acquire the knowledge and skill more effectively than when he is learning independently. In this way the student is enabled to participate in and accept some responsibility for learning.

7. "Let the student be aware of his own progress" so that he may feel a sense of achievement. You will do well to avoid any evaluative process which may threaten the students. In other words, if testing is required and needed, do testing when the students are ready for it. Test them on what they know, and not on what will result in their failure.

3. Adult learning activities

This list from Africa offers a variety of methods for teaching adults:

1. the talk
2. discussions
3. demonstrations
4. role playing

5. group work
6. field visits
7. case studies
8. panel discussions
9. debates
10. exhibitions
11. dances
12. theater
13. puppet shows
14. sports and games
15. national projects
16. social evenings
17. fund raisers
18. library events

4. Making learning an active process

Good learning is an active process. The good teacher plans at least two or three activities for each lesson. This chart from Tanzania give some ideas:

LISTEN	to a talk, to an explanation, to a teacher, to a tape-recorder, to the radio
QUESTION	"Is that really true in my village?" "Why is that the result?"
WRITE	notes, summaries, reports, exercises, answers to questions
OBSERVE	a demonstration or visual aid, a picture, object, diagram, map or film
AGREE OR DISAGREE	"Yes, that seems to be right."

TOUCH	soil to see if it's wet, cloth to see if it's good fabric
COMPARE	Which ear of corn is larger?
EVALUATE	Which is the better method of feeding babies?
TRY-OUT	cook the meal, sew the dress, dig the latrine, make the sodbed
MOVE ABOUT	break into small groups, take part in singing or dancing
ANALYZE	What factors caused a drop in the price of rice? What do we need water for?

5. Organizing classes

Peace Corps Volunteers in Bolivia published a short paper on teaching adults. Here's an excerpt about organizing classes:

> The first barrier to getting started is the classroom and enough equipment. Do the best you can: things will go smoother.
>
> Make sure your teacher is conscientious and well-trained.
>
> From the first class it help to establish an attendance chart, to keep the students attending regularly, and to secure relevant information from each student, such as his age, civil status, Spanish speaking ability, occupation, number of illiterates in his house, etc. These measures will help the teacher establish a more personal relationship with each student and will help her understand the student's particular problems. Also helpful is finding out if the students are interested in supplementary classes in homemaking, child care, etc.
>
> Another organization factor is that the class should be kept small and homogenous. Fifteen students is a maximum, especially when dealing with adults....
>
> Depending on the composition of the class, convenient class hours must be chosen (success depends on this). Long hours once a week give poorer results than shorter bi- or tri-weekly classes, which provide a more regular pattern of practice, review and reinforcement....

Lastly, each member of the class should have his own book and materials from the beginning, which not only motivates him, but gives him something to review at home.

6. Audio-visual aids

Here's a list of visual aids, compiled by Literacy House in India:

1. puppets
2. flashcards
3. flannel graphs
4. cutouts from magazines
5. charts
6. diagrams
7. posters
8. cartoons
9. comic strips
10. models
11. slides
12. films
13. radio and television
14. pocket charts
15. phonics wheels

7. Encouraging your student

What can you do to encourage an adult student? Here's a passage from an inspirational-type pamphlet written for U.S. adults. Use it as you will.

For one thing, the decision to continue learning was made by you...Most adults participate in adult education because they want to.

> Adult education is a part-time activity. Study habits must be built into and around your daily life--earning a living, bringing up a family, taking part in community life.
>
> In adult learning groups, the teacher or leader is seldom a person with authority over you. You can tell him exactly what you think and feel. You and the teacher or group leader will discuss problems as adult equals....
>
> Adult education is different, too, because you are different. You are no longer a child. You've had experiences, developed opinions, acquired practical know-how in some field. Because of this, you can make a contribution to class learning.

Other ways in which adult classes are different:

a. more informal

b. examinations are not so important

c. more interaction among peers

d. teacher may be younger than the students

e. students must be more self-directed

8. Supporting services for literacy

Any large-scale adult literacy program needs many supporting services. USAID advises its people to remember the following:

1. writing and illustrating services
2. publishing and printing facilities, including:
   a. editorial services
   b. printing presses, adequately housed
   c. storage space for printed materials
   d. printing supplies
   e. expanded newspaper and magazine service
3. transportation facilities

4. school supply services (pencils, pens, etc.--may not otherwise be available)

5. equipment installation, operation and maintenance services

6. teacher training and retraining facilities

7. research and experimentation facilities, including testing and evaluation teams

9. Recruiting

Karen Stockman and Bruce Haberkamp, two Bolivia-RPCVs, give these suggestions for raising money and recruiting students:

> Fundraising: "It is often better to work through existing organizations in order to generate enthusiasm and commitment." These include churches, clubs, scout troops, professional schools, high schools, professional people in general.
>
> Recruiting gimmicks include "publicity, to attract both teachers and students; house to house canvassing; promise of field trips; the support of influential people, etc."

10. Visual Literacy

One problem illiterate adults often have is understanding pictures and visual material. A clear photograph or diagram may be considered a ghost, or be totally intelligible to the untrained eye. Learning to understand pictures and graphics is as much a skill to master as reading or writing.

Anne and Fred Zimmer, whose excellent book on visual literacy is listed in the bibliography, make this point:

> "The first job of the visual communicator is not to draw pictures. It is to find out what visual communication is already going on among the people he wants to reach, and to get the other information he needs in order to design materials that communicate properly. To do this, he makes a collection, called a 'visual inventory.' Instead of putting together elegant designs from all over the world, he samples the visual communication his intended audience already

sees. Then he finds out how--and whether--these examples communicate by asking questions based on a model of communication process. The visual language of the successful visual messages can then be analyzed. Then when appropriate, it can be used in new visual messages."

11. Reading materials

A variety of materials can be used both in primary and follow-up literacy instruction. Here are twenty:

1. a stamp set
2. stencils
3. a plastic label maker
4. blank tabs and labels
5. wooden letters
6. scissors, index cards, glue and old newspapers (to make word cards)
7. lettering charts
8. index cards
9. cartoons
10. typewriter
11. tape recorders
12. any printed material (maps, signs, graffiti)
13. government manuals or pamphlets
14. manuals, textbooks, travel brochures
15. mimeo machine
16. songbooks
17. films with captions (from deaf school?)
18. pictures requiring captions

19. reading posters

20. word games (Scrabble, Lotto, Password, etc.)

12. Techniques for remembering words

Here are three techniques to help students remember words. For related ideas, see Tutor, the handbook of Literacy Volunteers of America.

1. Visual Techniques: Take the word card and hold it in front of the student, saying "Look at the word and take a picture of the letters with your eyes exactly the way you'd take a picture of a new friend." Look at the word. Say the word. Now close your eyes and picture the word in your mind. Can you see the word? Now open your eyes and look at the card again. What is the word?

2. Kinesthetic Technique: For short words of two, three or four letters, it is often helpful to ask him to write the word in the air with his index finger if he knows the letters. This fixes the letters of that word in his mind and provides another sensory pathway for recall of the word.

3. Tactile Technique: Sometimes the student will get the feel of the letters best when you write them large on his back.

13. Literacy Games

These games aid in developing specific learning skills.

I. The following games offer practice in encoding a picture or spoken word into its equivalent in written language:

EL CHULO	A player chooses a card which contains the picture of an animal and places it on a games board containing the written form of the animal's name. This occurs after a series of bets on the animals has taken place. The game is based on a traditional Ecuadorian betting game.
CONCENTRATION	Fifteen pairs of cards are laid out face down. Each player turns up a set of cards hoping to find matching pairs. A pair consists of identical letters, syllables, pairs of words, complementary parts of one word or words with their pictorial representation.

LOTTERY*	Each player receives a game board. Cards with words written on them are placed in a bag. The game leader (facilitator) draws a card and shows or reads the word on it to the group. The card is given to the player who has the drawing corresponding to the word on the card. There are many other variations to this game.

II. The following games offer practice in combining letters into written words, and decoding written words into spoken words:

LETTER DICE*	Eleven wooden dice which contain a letter on all sides are thrown on a table. The players take turns forming words with the letters which appear on the top of the cube.
LETTER RUMMY	Sixty-six cards contain the letters of the alphabet. The cards are dealt out to the players who take turns trying to form words from the letters they have on their cards.
WORD TRIP*	This is a simple literacy game which combines board play with a strategy for forming words.
LETTER CHIPS	This game resembles Scrabble. Players build words with letters which appear on small wooden chips. Each player builds upon the words formed by preceding players. The result looks like a cross-word puzzle.

III. The following games offer practice in forming syllables, decoding syllables into sounds and decoding written words into spoken form:

SYLLABLE DICE	This game is similar to letter dice, only all the wooden blocks contain syllables instead of letters.
THE FREIRE GAME	A deck of cards containing syllables and combinations of syllables of one word are shuffled and given to the players. Within a time limit each player tries to form as many words as possible with the cards he has drawn. There are full decks of cards for the syllable combinations of each key word.

IV. The following game helps the learner build sentences from phrases and decode written sentences into spoken form:

THE SENTENCE GAME*	Color coded cards containing words which are divided into grammatical categories are given to the players. The first player leads off with a subject card, the next follows with a verb card and the third with an object card. When the sentence is completed they read it and discuss the meaning. The game can be made more complicated by adding other parts of speech.

V. The following game helps the learner encode a series of picture stamps into written and spoken stories:

RUBBER STAMP LITERACY METHOD	Stamps are prepared with pictures which are visual representations of key words. The players stamp out a story with the stamps, or arrange stamped pictures into a story. Thus they are encouraged to create, write and tell stories with the rubber stamps.

CHAPTER SEVEN

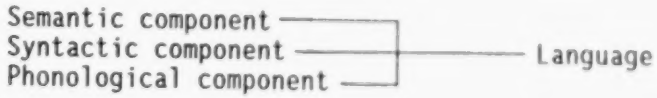
LINGUISTICS AND LITERACY

Look at the linguistic side of literacy and you're bound to face many practical problems. The government may want the national language taught to speakers of a tribal or minority language. The language may not be mapped out fully linguistically. Dialects and trade languages may be spoken widely. These may be very different from the written language. Then consider the biggest problem of all: a Peace Corps Volunteer may be asked to negotiate all this in a language only learned during training.

Linguistics is a field far too extensive to cover here. What follows, however, are two excerpts from excellent sources. The first is a general introduction to theoretical linguistics, while the second examines the linguistic background of adults.

1. Kenneth I. Baucom, The ABCs of Literacy: Lessons from Linguistics, pp. 18-23.

   Although there are a number of different linguistic theories, all of them agree that a spoken language has three basic components: (a) a **semantic component** (that is the part of language which deals with meaning); (b) a **syntactic component** or syntax (that is what many people would call the grammar of language); and (c) a **phonological component** (that is the sound part of language). These three components can be seen in the following diagram:



Modern theories of language differ as to which of these three components is considered to be the most central part of language, and they may differ on how one component is related to another. But they all agree that language is made up of three basic parts--meaning, sound and syntax.

Let us look in a little detail at how these components work in a language and, also, **what language is not**. A spoken language makes use of sounds to convey meanings. But human language does not do this directly. By this I mean that in human language there is not one meaning with one sound directly related to it. This may be true for the language systems of other animals. But with human beings it is not true. Thus, it is not true that a meaning such as 'mountain' has a single sound which represents that meaning. Nor is it true, on the other hand, that a single sound such as 'b' wholly and always represents a single meaning.

If a language operated in the above fashion, the number of meanings that you could produce by language would be limited. It would be limited by the number of individual sounds that you could both produce and easily distinguish. If you could make and distinguish fifty sounds, then you could have fifty meanings, and if you could make and distinguish 100 sounds, you could have 100 meanings--and perhaps some simple combinations of those meanings. But, no matter what happened, the meaning system would be very restricted by the small number of sounds.

In order to solve this problem of being restricted to only a few meanings by a few sounds, natural human language has found this solution. It has developed a structure through which **an infinite number of meanings can be expressed with only a few sounds**. This structure is the threefold semantic, syntax, phonology divisions that were mentioned above. Thus, a person is able to produce a limitless number of sentences in any language--even sentences which have never been produced before in the language--all by using a very limited number of sounds. This is what makes human language so highly useful. It can express things that have never been expressed before by using sound units which are very limited in number.

Let us look more closely at **phonology**--the sound component of language. This is a good place to start. It is on the surface of language and is the component most easily dealt with.

Linguists have traditionally distinguished a limited number of sounds in each human language. Thus, one might say that the sounds of Ewe (a language of Togo and Ghana) are limited in number to thirty-six. When linguists have said this, they have not meant that there are only thirty-six single and discrete sounds within the language. They mean that there are thirty-six classes within the language, each of which might be realized by a number of similar but slightly different sounds. These sound classes have been called **phonemes**.

All of this might be sounding a bit complicated. So we will look more specifically at what is meant by phonemes. We will use as an

example the phonemes of Akha, a language spoken in parts of Burma, China, Laos and Thailand.

Akha has twenty-six consonants and thirteen vowels, giving a total of thirty-nine sound classes. Each of these classes is called a phoneme. One of the consonant phonemes of Akha is 'p'. But 'p' represents a sound class, not an individual sound. 'P' is not always pronounced the same way in every word in Akha. Before some vowels, 'p' in Akha is formed with a short burst of air at the end. This burst of air is called aspiration. And a 'p' with a burst of air is described as being aspirated. (It sounds much like the English 'p' in 'pot'.) But before other vowels in Akha 'p' is called unaspirated. (An unaspirated 'p' sounds much like the English 'p' in spot.)

Thus, the Akha phoneme 'p' has two pronunciations. One is an aspirated sound. And one is an unaspirated sound. Each of the separate sounds is called a **phone**, but the abstract class 'p' is called a phoneme.

When we said earlier that Akha has thirty-nine sound classes, we meant that it has thirty-nine phonemes. But it has more than thirty-nine phones. Yet Akha uses only thirty-nine phonemes to express all of the countless meanings that the language can produce.

What linguists call phonemes are **not just consonants and vowels**. In addition, individual languages might have phonemes of tone, of pitch, of stress, of length of vowels, of length of consonants, etc. For example, Akha also has three tone phonemes in addition to its thirty-nine consonants and vowels. There are numerous types of phoneme in addition to consonants and vowels. Yet all languages do have consonants and vowels as their basis. We will talk about this to a greater extent later.

For the moment, we might point out that alphabetic writing is a system for giving a visual symbol for each of the phonemes of a language--or at least for most of the phonemes of a language.

Now that we have looked at the sound component of language, we will look very briefly at **semantics**, the meaning part of language. All languages give structure to meaning. One way in which they do this is to **give linguistic importance to different aspects of meaning**. For example, many languages give greater importance to differences in meaning between living things (animate objects) and non-living things (inanimate objects). In such languages many meaning units must designate whether the object is living or non-living. English, for example, normally refers to living objects in the singular with the forms 'he' and 'she', and to non-living forms with 'it'. But many languages do not make such a distinction in pronoun forms.

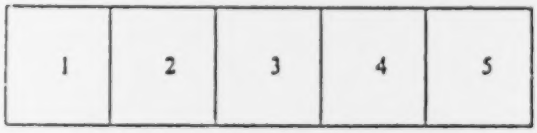
Here is another example. Many languages assign importance to difference in number between only one thing and more than one thing. The structure of these languages demands that we say whether there is only one thing involved or more than one thing involved. Other languages give importance to the 'one', 'two', or 'more than two'

framework. In such languages it is necessary to say whether there is one thing involved, two things involved, or more than two things involved. For example, in Nama Hottentot the following forms occur in the masculine pronoun:

tita	'I'	sakhom	'we(two)'	sage	'we(more than two)'
sats	'you(one)'	sakho	'you(two)'	sago	'you(more than two)'
llib	'he'	llikha	'they(two)'	lligu	'they(more than two)'

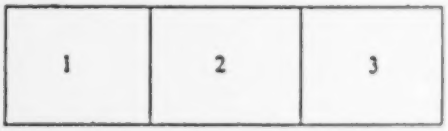
Languages do not only give differences in importance to different aspects of meaning. **Different languages also divide some views of the world in different fashions.** One of the most obvious places to see this is in how different languages divide the meaning of colours. Different colours are in fact a continuous band of light wave-lengths without any clear separation. Languages divide the wave-lengths into different colours. One language might divide these wave-lengths into five major sections. The speakers of such a language will have five major colours. But another language might divide the very same wave-lengths into only three major sections.

Language X



The colour spectrum

Language Y



The colour spectrum

Speakers of language Y will have only three major colours. It will be difficult for speakers of language X to understand how speakers of language Y divide up colours. For the meaning systems for colour are different in the two languages.

Another very important thing about meaning in language is that languages give **emotional meanings** to different denotative meanings. The meaning 'building' in English may not cause much emotional response. But the meaning 'shack' probably does. The emotional response associated with specific words is a very important topic for a literacy worker.

Perhaps the parts of the meaning system of language that we have been talking about are fairly easy to understand. But the meaning systems of language are very complex. And linguists are only now beginning to come to terms with some of the difficulties of the meaning side of language. But the semantic component of language is extremely important in the production of literacy materials. For this reason, there will be a somewhat lengthy discussion of semantics in the chapter in this book which deals with the production of materials (Chapter 5).

Now we will turn to the **syntactic component** of language. The syntactic component is what many people would normally think of as the grammar of the language. But linguists see the syntactic component of language as a very complex thing. It is certainly a far more complex thing than simply a list of grammatical rules such as one learns in school about a language. The discussion of syntax in this book is very limited, and you should realize that you will learn only a very few concepts. These are the ones which relate most directly to literacy.

The linguist deals with a number of grammatical concepts that are different from those of traditional grammar. There are two of these concepts which are especially important for the literacy worker to understand. These are the concepts of the **morpheme** and the **word**. Remember for the moment that we are talking primarily about spoken language. Therefore, when we talk about the word, we do not mean simply a written unit which has blank space on each side. This would be an orthographic word which is not the same thing as a linguistic word.

A morpheme is the smallest unit of sound in a language which is related to one meaning. A word is a unit which can stand alone in a language. A word might be made up of one morpheme, or it might be made up of more than one morpheme. In English the one word 'incomplete' is made up of two morphemes, 'in' meaning 'not', and 'complete' meaning 'whole, finished'. In Maori the word *ŋau* is made up one morpheme 'bite'. And the word *ŋaua* is made up of two morphemes, *ŋau* meaning 'bite' and *a* meaning 'passive voice'. Thus the word *ŋaua* would be translated into English as 'be bitten'.

It is important to remember that a word might consist of only one morpheme. But it is also very possible for a single word to consist of more than one morpheme.

The concepts of morpheme and word will be discussed at greater length in these lessons: (a) when we are talking about how to choose a writing system for a language; and (b) when we are talking about such things as frequency counts.

Over the last decade or more, linguists have paid very much of their attention to the syntactic component of language. They have attempted to discover what its nature is, and how it is related to the meaning component and the sound component. As was pointed out earlier, many of the modern **theories of language** differ as to how they see the relationships between the three components. These are very important questions to the linguist. But they are not crucial ones for the literacy worker.

One modern theory of language, however, suggests a point that is very important to the literacy worker: **is the phoneme real?** This theory of language insists that the traditionally recognized phoneme does not exist. This, of course, has very strong importance for literacy. For alphabetic writing depends on the use of visual symbols for the traditional type of phoneme. If there is no such thing as the

phoneme, then the use of alphabetic writing itself becomes questionable. This problem is discussed in more detail later in the book.

2. Rose-Marie Weber, "Learning to Read: The Linguistic Dimension for Adults," from Thomas P. Gorman, Language and Literacy: Current Issues and Research, pp. 11-17.

The linguistic background of adults

Consider first what linguistic knowledge adults bring to the task of learning to read. Although individuals differ in skills and by roles, although speech communities differ with respect to norms, around the world people distinguish occasions and their hearers by their use of formal or informal speech styles, serious or jocular, deferent or commanding, and so on. They know the principles that govern the structure of speech events as they tell stories, perform rituals, express affection, ask and answer questions (Hymes, 1974). In comparison to children, they have had much richer experience with language, having come to use it to different purposes in a variety of situations. Their learning of new varieties of language form and use, although never necessarily complete, has slowed down with their maturity in society. Adults may well be as able as children to extend their competence in language to the new uses that reading entails, but they may be less receptive to a new form of their language if it seems to serve no immediate purpose in their lives.

The knowledge of spoken language that adults bring to reading is abstract and complex, as extensive and intensive analysis of unwritten languages have shown (Friedrich, 1971) and the few studies of non-standard varieties of written languages have affirmed (Labov, 1972). They control a rich set of grammatical principles by which sentences are formed, a discriminating vocabulary that participates in the build-up of sentences, an intricately structured sound system, and complicated rules for interpreting the relations that hold between language and experience. Children, in fact, share much of this knowledge, but adults' more varied and longer participation in social life has yielded them a more subtle and flexible grammatical system and more finely-textured vocabulary. Furthermore, adults may command in their spoken repertory a formal variety of the language or one highly influenced by an important second language that more closely resembles written language than the everyday variety that they share with children.

Adults may also bring to reading the ability to analyse language as an object, that is, to make conscious judgments about its form apart from its meaning. Such metalinguistic analysis might include, for instance, judging whether two words begin with the same sound, how many syllables there are in a given word, or whether a sentence is grammatically well-formed. Many children around age six have difficulty learning to do these kinds of tasks, even though some may be requisite to grasping instruction on sound-character correspondences in alphabets or syllabaries. In fact, such inabilities may be the

primary source of reading difficulties for many children (Mattingly, 1972). Adults might be expected to find metalinguistic tasks easier by virtue of their mental maturity and their possible experience in their spoken language with word play and poetry. Whether or not they do is not clear, for experience shows that many show an uneasiness, for instance, in learning to segment the speech stream into individual sounds (Gudschinsky, 1973, p. 72).

Another aspect of the background that adults bring to reading is their disposition toward written language and its uses. Whether or not the variety of the language to be read is appropriate in the eyes of new learners may directly influence willingness to learn. Although educators may have good reason to provide instruction in a non-standard dialect or special orthography before moving on to the standard variety, learners may reject instruction with the feeling that they are being misled from their goal of learning the 'real' language.

In communities where the incidence of literacy is already high, adults may have a rather clear idea of the functions of written language, such as keeping records and disseminating news and technical knowledge. Literacy may then appear to be accessible to the extent that taking advantage of such functions may seem accessible or desirable. For instance, in a given community, some people may feel that it is presumptuous of them to seek knowledge outside traditional domains; others may feel that they should learn to read in order to participate in the creation of positive social change; still others may feel in conflict. These sorts of attitudes influence the most mechanical aspects of learning to read. Like learning a second language (Lambert and Gardner, 1972) or another dialect (Labov, 1972a), learning to read is sensitive to unconscious values that may, on the one hand, cause people to look and feel incompetent or, on the other, stir them to mastery of complex skills in a surprisingly short period.

Learning new functions

Learning to read with effectiveness is not just a matter of mastering the written form of a language, but also learning new uses and purposes for it. These uses follow from the special qualities of written language itself, particularly its relative permanence and its independence from immediate social context. Its permanence, for instance, provides a culture with an external memory, making the record of daily events, instructions, expressions of belief, and the like available to readers through long periods of time and across wide distances. Its independence from face-to-face encounters, for example, allows writers to formulate and reformulate complex, impersonal texts as well as more spontaneous messages, and enables readers to take information in at their own speed and as frequently as they may want.

Of course, communities differ in the purposes for written language and the conditions that individuals and institutions take into account when choosing it over speech. The learning demands on new literates,

therefore, vary from place to place and, along with social change, through passing time. In some communities, the written language serves primarily to preserve or reveal the sacred word. In others, it may extend to carrying on the affairs of the state, commerce, and formal education toward those ends, but may hardly affect daily personal life. In still others, it may constitute not only the enabling condition for the character of the major institutions in the society, but may also enter into the work, expression of feelings, and intellectual development of most people. In fact, systematic descriptions of all the possible and appropriate ways for using written language along with face-to-face speech and electronic speech in a society have scarcely been undertaken (Basso, 1975; Goody, 1965). Furthermore, changes in the functions of written language, other than for literature (e.g., Jones, 1953), have not been followed so closely as the spread of minimal reading skills (e.g., Cipolla, 1969). Although success in learning to read may create the possibility for learners to expand their linguistic competence in new and desirable ways, the society may not be able to provide the conditions to sustain new functions for all members except through important changes in social structure and economic prosperity (e.g., Ruiz, 1963).

Whatever the functions of written language may be, they demand that learners acquire principles of interpretation that allow them not only to make literal sense out of print, but also to penetrate the situation. In English, for instance, readers must recognize that the source and significance of a street sign saying *Stop* is different from one saying *Drink Fizzle*; that the date on a document indicates the time of writing and the verb tenses are used from this perspective (*I am feeling better today. By the time you read this, I'll be home.*); that a newspaper headline synopsises the story that appears below; that a name and address in one position indicates the addressee, in another position the sender. Such small matters can accumulate quickly as new learners encounter them.

Becoming literate, then, is much more than learning to deal with language in a new form. It requires engaging with familiar topics in new ways. It also requires learning to use language that deals with new topics such as technical subjects, political ideas, real and fictitious people that may have little foundation in experience other than reading experience. Becoming a skilled reader grows from the interplay between identifying linguistic elements and acquiring the background for interpreting them. For some adults, coming to deal with language that creates contexts apart from daily affairs may well be the major barrier to the acquisition of reading (Harman, 1974).

Learning a new form

By virtue of knowing how to speak and understand their mother tongue, people know a good deal about reading it. For the most part they can apply to understanding print the same linguistic knowledge that they apply to understanding speech--the grammatical organisation in sentences, the structure of the vocabulary, the sound system, and the principles for interpreting texts with respect to experience. But the

written language does not mirror its spoken counterpart exactly. Rather, it is governed by somewhat divergent principles that require new readers to extend and refine their linguistic competence. These principles, however, have not been adequately described from one language to another, except for orthography. Nor have safe conclusions been drawn for writing in general (Basso, 1975). Handbooks that offer instruction in good writing provide good leads (for cross-linguistic comparison, see Kaplan, 1972). But they usually concentrate on only one or another genre and rest on many unspoken values and assumptions, so that they fail to capture basic characteristics of written language.

In newly established traditions in writing, people generally do not feel that ordinary speech is appropriate for writing (Ferguson, 1968). They appreciate written language as an exceptional form, akin to speech on special occasions, such as formal ceremonies. In some established traditions, on the other hand, writing may often represent casual speech, but word-for-word transcriptions are rejected as infelicitous and are felt to require editing. By and large, the written variety tends to be at least a notch higher in formality than speech in comparable context, for instance, a written business report in contrast to a spoken report at a meeting.

The possibilities for using language as a kind of external memory has led to a range of genres, some with close analogues in speech, others sharply divergent and even unique to writing. The divergent genres, such as labels, dictionaries, and advertisements demand special conventions for understanding and using them. For instance, a telephone directory in English involves alphabetical order, the arrangement of names with family names first, abbreviations, and various type-sizes. The distinctiveness of written language is not so obvious in genres that have analogues in speech, for example, a friendly letter compared to a friendly chat. Yet point for point comparisons of the basic organisation of the message, the means for showing emphasis, and the devices for keeping lines of development clear will reveal differences that may be unfamiliar to new readers.

In general, texts in English are expected to conform to specific standards of spelling, spacing, and organisation of content and to avoid signs of the editing, change of mind, and hesitations that writers can indulge in. Since written texts must stand on their own without support from social setting or immediate feedback from the audience, they are expected to be coherent, precise in their expression, and fully developed to their purpose. There is therefore usually less redundancy in writing, so that the meaning of the text is more compactly presented than it would be in speech. On the other hand, the message may be detailed and elaborated beyond the bounds normal in a comparable spoken context. The means for organising the presentation of the message (*First: In conclusion*), rhetorical devices that indicate the logical relationship of the parts (*To be specific; In contrast*) and cohesive devices for tying new elements to those that have preceded (*A young couple walked by ... The girl ... She ...*) are among the features that are generally more explicitly and exactly expressed in writing. Some of these devices may be widespread

in the written traditions of the world, while others may be peculiar to a given language and to given genres (Grimes, 1975).

Although the grammatical principles for structuring sentences usually coincide with those in spoken language, some sentence types are limited to written texts or formal spoken styles, e.g. non-restrictive relative clauses (*His daughter, whom I had seen only once before, entered silently*), and complements in subject position (*That she had been crying was obvious*). Special syntactic forms serve only written purposes, such as instruction labels (*Store in a cool place*), newspaper headlines, and legal documents. The vocabulary of written language includes, of course, a multitude of terms that have flourished as a result of literacy. Many English items having their source in Latin or French may appear in the everyday speech of literate speakers, but would probably not appear in the speech of illiterates, e.g., *retain, amiable, stratified*, in contrast to *keep, friendly, in layers*. Even though new literates in English might be interested in becoming familiar with only a limited range of written material, they cannot avoid specialised syntax and vocabulary.

Most writing traditions have favoured a written form that is basically an extension and elaboration of the spoken variety, so that most learners' primary task is to enlarge on their previous knowledge of the language and to learn how to use it in particular contexts. There may be speakers living in such a tradition, however, whose dialect does not have so close a relationship to the written norm. Their task may be to learn an alternative variety of their language as they become literate, including not only new vocabulary but also morphology--the combination of suffixes and prefixes on word stems--and other grammatical features as well. Such is precisely the task for all learners in some language situations called diglossia, exemplified by the Arabic speaking world and much of South Asia. In this case, the written variety, adopted in speech for some formal speech events by the educated, differ from everyday speech in striking ways. The written variety includes such features as distinctive word order, greater complexity in the expression of grammatical categories such as gender, case, and verb tenses, as well as alternative vocabulary items for even mundane objects (Ferguson, 1959). The learning task for new literates, then, is to learn essentially a closely related second language. In some diglossic situations, new literates may come to learning to read with some knowledge of the formal spoken variety; in others, there may exist a choice of written varieties so that learners can approach reading in a variety closer to their speech, at least at the outset.

Learning to read also entails, of course, getting to know the form for representing a language graphically and the relationship of that form to the spoken language. Alphabetic and syllabic writing systems are more economical to learn than a logographic system like Chinese because they take advantage of the structural economy built into the organisation of a language: the possibility for a small number of meaningless units, namely sounds, to combine with one another to represent an unlimited number of units that have meaning, namely words and their parts. It is obvious that in most writing systems the

relationship of the written representation to the spoken language is not always straightforward. Too often there are apparent exceptions to the general principle that a given character corresponds to a given sound or syllable in the language, possibly because the spoken variety and the written variety have changed along different lines. Yet at least some of these exceptions can be resolved in the light of other significant principles of writing systems (O'Neil, 1969; Vachek, 1973; Venezky, 1970).

One such principle that is even built into newly-created writing systems is that a morpheme, either a stem, suffix, or prefix, tends to be represented with the same set of characters, even though it may show variation in its pronunciation from one context to another. In English, for instance, the sequence *negat-* remains constant, in spite of differences in stress and vowel quality in *negation* and *negative*; *-ed* stays the same in spite of the differences governed by the sound system in *talked* [t], *whispered* [d] and *shouted* [əd]. Across dialects, styles, and word boundaries, *r's* may come and go in the flow of speech, but in the writing system they remain, as in the phrase *our older brother*. Another important principle in writing systems is that morphemes that sound alike may be kept apart in writing, such as *sight*, *site*, *cite*, and *cyt-*. These two principles may place a learning burden on beginning readers, since they require attention to the identity of specific morphemes, but they probably benefit the fluent reader who can take advantage of this more direct representation of meaning.

A third sort of principle in writing systems is that characters may fall into regular patterning that has no correspondence in the spoken system. An important graphic regularity in English, for instance, is the doubling of consonant letters in certain conditions. The letters do not relate to doubled sounds but rather mark the quality of the preceding vowel as 'short', so that *supper* contrasts with *super* and *holly* with *holy*. Constraints on the distribution of letters in morphemes or words exemplifies another kind of independent patterning in writing systems. In English, for instance, the letter *v* does not appear at the ends of words, but is followed by an *-e*, e.g., *leave*, *have*. Variation in the shape of characters according to their position in words is important in other systems, such as Arabic. Finally, many languages show strains of foreign sources in the present-day systems, some of these strains so deeply embedded that they are not longer considered foreign, but others that defy the native writing system, e.g., modern French forms in English such as *vis-a-vis* and *apropos*.

Learning a set of characters, their relation to the spoken language, their internal patterning, their alternative versions in type and script, along with various conventions that may exist for spacing, punctuation, and capitalisation demands control over features of language that themselves do not have meaning but only serve to represent it. Although it is possible for learners to master the details of the written system with little conscious attention to it (e.g., Torrey, 1969), experience indicates that they can benefit from

explicit instruction, as distracting as it may be from the goal of getting at meaning.

The problem is that the precise principles that readers--either accomplished or aspiring--may use to identify words have not been entirely determined, so that it is not clear what instruction can best serve learners. What they seem to learn or refine at the early stages of reading defies isolation for instructional purposes: the features that distinguish characters from one another, abstract relations between written and spoken segments, the constraints on letter sequences against a background of constraints on sound sequences; the use of preceding grammatical structure and meaning to narrow down the possibilities of subsequent words; strategies to pick up the minimum information from the word display and the context so as to identify words most economically (Gibson and Levin, 1975). From this perspective it would seem that instruction can only guide readers to seek relations, construct strategies out of awareness and form generalisations that they can come in time to apply and integrate automatically. Perhaps adults can benefit more directly than children from explicit instruction in contrast to systematic exposure. But there may be variation in this ability due to culturally-determined learning styles and experience.

The general consideration of differences between spoken and written varieties of language leads to the conclusion that learning to read one's mother tongue requires learning a new variety of the language that differs along various dimensions in subtle and intricate ways. When language is fixed in writing it takes on a separate identity, serving different functions and following different principles of organisation from its spoken counterparts. What the differences may be will vary from one speech community to another and will, of course, vary within it. They have hardly been described in any detail to serve rational programmes in literacy. But it should be recognised that in learning to read, these functions and principles, like motivation, cannot be separated from the technical aspect of identifying the written representation of a word or sentence in the context of use.

NOTES

Unless marked with an asterisk (*), all works cited in these notes are also included in the annotated bibliography.

Chapter One

1. Both "nonformal" and "nontraditional" education are spelled in different ways by different writers. For the sake of consistency, I use these spellings throughout this book.

2. This is excerpted from one of the numerous UNESCO literacy works. For that organization's most comprehensive work on literacy, see The Experimental World Literacy Programme; A Critical Assessment.

3. Farideh Mashayekh, "Freire--The Man, His Ideas and Their Implications," in Teaching Reading and Writing to Adults; A Sourcebook, pp. 49-50. (Book hereafter referred to as Sourcebook)

4. Ivan Illich, "The Need for a Cultural Revolution," Risk, Vol. VI, No. 4 (1970), pp. 37-38*. Illich explains his controversial philosophy more fully in his Deschooling Society.

5. Ted W. Ward and William A. Herzog, Jr., eds., Effective Learning in Non-Formal Education, p. 17.

6. International Council for Educational Development, Nonformal Education for Rural Development. (Draft of Final Report) Essex, Conn.: CED, 1972, p. 4*.

7. These areas draw from the work of Roshan Billimoria. See David R. Evans and William A. Smith, "Non-Formal Education," pp. 16-17.

Chapter Two

Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in this chapter are from interviews conducted by David Jarmul for this book.

1. Herbert Kohl, Reading, How To, xi-xii.

2. The New York Times reported on July 3, 1979 that UNESCO now estimates that 62 of the United Nations' 146 member countries have illiteracy

rates above 50 percent. The figure is above 90 percent in 20 nations. In many countries, virtually all women are illiterate.

3. For the ins and outs of different definitions, see T.A. Koshy, "New Developments in Literacy."

4. Jonathan Kozol, Children of the Revolution, pp. 79-80.

5. Brunet was writing for UNESCO. For a practical explanation of that organization's approach to functional literacy, see Practical Guide to Functional Literacy.

Chapter Three

1. Sarah Gudschinsky, "The Teaching of Writing," from the Sourcebook.

2. The International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods says in the introduction to the writing section of its Sourcebook: "It is generally considered that the perceptual and motor skills required of the beginner are less challenging when block letters are used."

3. See Chapter 7 for more ideas on writing.

Chapter Four

1. A more thorough examination of handwriting is in Chapter 4.

2. The quote is by Irving Lorge from "How Adults Can Learn More--Faster."

3. Karel Neijs, UNESCO Manuals on Adult and Youth Education, No. 2, Literacy Primers: Construction, Evaluation and Use.

4. Ruth J. Colvin and Jane H. Root, Tutor, p. 12.

5. This list of motivations was compiled in Tanzania.

6. Betty J. Fatula, "Facilitating Adult Learning."

7. From Tanzania's Adult Education Handbook, pp. 123 ff.

Chapter Five

1. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, pp. 66-67.

2. See Technical Note No. 11, "The Facilitator," from The Ecuador Non-Formal Education Project.

3. See Kozol, Children of the Revolution.

4. Tanzania, Adult Education Handbook.

5. Ibid.

6. Colvin and Root, Tutor.

7. Stockman and Haberkamp, "Literacy and the Volunteer," p. 4.

8. Kohl, Reading, How To, p. 202.

Chapter Six

1. Tanzania, Adult Education Handbook.

2. Christian R.A. Cole, "Training Teachers to Teach Adults," from Literacy Handbook, p. 19.

3. Tanzania, Adult Education Handbook.

4. Ibid.

5. Stockman and Haberkamp, "Literacy and the Volunteer," pp. 3-4.

6. For a complete listing of other practical materials from Literacy House, see their address in the appendix.

7. "How Adults Can Learn More--Faster."

8. USAID, like Peace Corps, is in some countries revising its approach to literacy. For current information, consult their local office.

9. Stockman and Haberkamp, "Literacy and the Volunteer," p. 3.

10. Anne and Fred Zimmer, Visual Literacy in Communication: Designing for Development, pp. 78-79.

11. Kohl, Reading, How To, pp. 163 ff.

12. Colvin and Root, Tutor, p. 25.

13. Jock Gunter, Technical Note No. 9 from the Ecuador Non-Formal Education Project.

APPENDIX

The following groups and institutions are all involved in literacy, development or nonformal education. They are excellent resources for information or materials on these subjects. Their staffs often include several former Peace Corps Volunteers, so they are likely to appreciate your problems. You may contact these groups directly, or do it through Peace Corps/Washington.

Center for International Education

Hills House So.
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts 01003
Tel.: 413-545-0465

A major center for the study of nonformal education in developing countries. Its faculty and students have worked in and published about literacy and nonformal education projects worldwide. This is an excellent source for both academic and "how-to" material. Send for their list of goodies.

The Clearinghouse on Development Communication

Academy for Educational Development, Inc.
1414 22nd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
Tel.: 202-862-1900

This group is interested in how different kinds of media/communication might promote development. They offer expertise on "everything from flip charts to satellites." Case studies are available for a large number of developing countries.

East-West Center

1777 East-West Road
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

A national educational institution established in Hawaii in 1960. It brings together scholars from Asia, the Pacific and America to focus on communication, language learning, food systems, population dynamics and appropriate technology in developing countries. The center publishes papers, reports, newsletters and other materials that are frequently of interest.

International Council for Educational Development

P.O. Box 217
Essex, Connecticut 06426

A private international organization that promotes comparative studies in "the development of education and education for development." Among its program interests is the role of nonformal education in rural development.

The International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods (IIALM)

P.O. Box 1555
Tehran, Iran

The foremost world center for the study and promotion of adult literacy. It is the first stop for almost any inquiry on the subject. While the IIALM staff is composed largely of academic experts, its publications are generally very practical and free from jargon. The institute publishes a variety of monographs, occasional papers, bibliographies and directories. It offers excellent stuff at reasonable prices. If you're interested in literacy and have just one postcard to send, mail it here.

Laubach Literacy International

1320 Jamesville Avenue
Box 131
Syracuse, New York 13210

A non-profit, educational organization that promotes, develops and finances literacy and adult basic education programs worldwide. A well-established group, Laubach encourages "problem-solving literacy" through the "Each One Teach One" approach developed by founder Frank C. Laubach. They are big on a controversial technique that reinforces alphabet sounds through pictorial references.

Literacy House

P.O. Almbagh
Lucknow - 226005
India

For many years, one of the most respected international centers on literacy and adult education. It is affiliated with World Education of New York, but publishes on its own a large number of texts and papers. Most of these are available for a very modest charge.

The Non-Formal Education Information Center

Institute for International Studies in Education
513 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

This center offers what may be the world's most comprehensive collection of materials on nonformal education. It prints regularly The NFE Exchange, "a timely information exchange service on Non-Formal Education." Each issue focuses on a special concern: adults and employment, skills training programs for adults, mobilizing youth, etc.

UNESCO

International headquarters:
UNESCO Press
7 Place de Fontenoy
75700 Paris
France

The educational publications arm of the United Nations. It prints numerous works on education and development, including numerous works on literacy. The quality of both the writing and the material in these works is uneven, but some of the publications are quite good. What's more, they are often free.

Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA)

3706 Rhode Island Avenue
Mt. Ranier, Maryland 20822

This Washington-based, private organization supplies information and assistance to people seeking technical help in more than 100 developing countries. While not strong in literacy, VITA might help with integrating nonformal education into larger development efforts. They are good at "nuts and bolts" types of problems. On retainer with Peace Corps, so feel free to turn to them for help.

World Education

1414 Sixth Avenue
New York, New York 10019

A private organization that provides technical assistance to programs for the functional education of adults worldwide. World Education works especially with nonformal education programs related to literacy, food production and family planning. They publish an excellent magazine, Reports, and maintain a superb resource center.

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